

**Remarks**

The various parts of the Office Action (and other matters, if any) are discussed below under appropriate headings.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112***

Claims 18-23 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Claim 18 has been amended to clarify that the multiple stacks of sheet stock material are connected together in series to form a continuous ply of sheet stock material. Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102 and § 103***

A. Claims 10-14, 16-23 and 29 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by or as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,387,173 to Simmons, Jr. ("Simmons '173"), and/or under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Simmons '173 in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,027,298 to Crowley ("Crowley") and/or U.S. Patent No. 6,068,125 to Slaters, Jr. et al. ("Slaters").

While Simmons '173 does disclose placing multiple stacks of sheet stock material on a pallet for shipment to an end user, Simmons '173 fails to disclose or to suggest positioning a pallet proximate a converter and splicing or otherwise connecting multiple stacks of stock material in series. Neither Crowley nor Slaters appears to disclose connecting multiple stacks in sequence.

Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

B. Claims 1-16 and 29-34 have been rejected (i) under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,823,936 to Ratzel ("Ratzel"), or (ii) under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ratzel, or (iii) under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ratzel and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,756,096 to Harding ("Harding"), or (iv) under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ratzel and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,095,454 to Simmons, Jr. et al. ("Simmons '454.")

Although Ratzel discloses a multi-ply stack of fan-folded sheet stock material (Ratzel, col. 5, lines 21-24), Ratzel fails to disclose supplying multiple stacks or connecting multiple stacks together in series.

Harding fails to teach or suggest the deficiencies of Ratzel. While Harding does suggest splicing a new supply of stock material to the trailing end of an almost-spent supply of stock material sticking out of a converter, Harding fails to teach or suggest a multi-stack supply of stock material with the stock material of the multiple stacks connected together to be fed into a conversion machine in sequence.

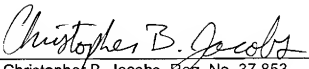
Withdrawal of the rejection is requested.

#### **Conclusion**

In view of the foregoing, request is made for timely issuance of a notice of allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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